

Ella B. Butz (1888-1982)

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ABSTRACT

Interviewee: Ella B. Butz

Interviewer: Rhea Adler

Date of interview: March 26, 1976

Wilmette in 1890's

Early activities

Wilmette Country Club

Mention of many early families and people by name

Butz and Arend family histories

Northwestern Academy and New Trier High School early beginnings

Social and athletic activities

Lake front trips

The pages that follow constitute the transcript of an interview conducted as part of the Wilmette Public Library District's Oral History program, started in 1975 by a committee of the Friends of the Wilmette Public Library which has been chaired since its inception by Rhea Adler, a resident of the Village of Wilmette since 1932.

A copy of the tape on which this transcript is based is available for circulation, and may be obtained by checking with a Reference Librarian concerning circulation procedures.

This program would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many long-time residents of the Village interested in helping to preserve particulars of a fascinating past, and the patience, energy and effort of a small but dedicated group of interviewers, transcribers and typists who share the belief that the past is too important to be forgotten.

Richard E. Thompson

Director

Ella B. Butz

RA: When did you come to Wilmette?

EBB: May the first, 1896.

RA: 1896 - and where did you live before that?

EBB: We lived on Wellington Avenue in Chicago that's on the North Side.

RA: Then how many were in your family?

EBB: Well, at that time there was just my mother and father and my oldest sister Florence and myself....the four of us.

RA: And eventually how many were there?

EBB: Well, it's sort of a funny story (laugh). When we came, it was in the summertime and my aunt and uncle had found a boarding place across the street from our house at Chances, and my aunt wasn't very well and they thought it would be good to get her out of Chicago and be in the country, and they enjoyed it so much that we found a boarding place right across the street at the Lewis J. Pearson house and so we were there for several weeks. Then at the end of the summer we were to go back to Chicago, of course we children had to go to school, and we found that the empty lot next to our apartment building was going to have a three-story apartment building built and it would take all the light from our bedrooms, so they decided that they wanted to move and my aunt and uncle had enjoyed Wilmette so much and we had too, we children got acquainted with all the

Ella B. Butz, cont. 2

neighborhood you know, and liked everybody and they all accepted us, the older folks had such a good time together and we found that this house, 802 Lake Avenue, the Skeltons were living in that house, and they were building a new house in the next block and they would move this coming year as soon as that house was finished and we found that that big house was to be for rent, so my family, my mother and father and two sisters and my aunt and uncle and my grandmother Arend who was living with them, decided to rent that house and live in it next year, but -



Butz family at 802 Lake Ave., Wilmette

RA: Tell me about your father and mother when they were single and lived in Chicago.

EBB: Well, I know very little about it - I know they lived not very far away, they both lived on LaSalle Street in Chicago and where they met I don't know. I know mother went to dancing school, Bournique Dancing School, and Miss Bournique is here now - the granddaughter - and I don't know, I never heard of mother speak of father going to that dancing school, I just remember her talking about

Ella B. Butz, cont. 3

going that winter when she was 19 years old - that picture up there - when she was 19. It's so beautiful. What a very good time she had, so I really don't know where they met, but they lived in the same neighborhood, and of course they were both of German extraction, their parents lived there too.

RA: And tell me about the parents of each of them.

EBB: Well, my grandfather Butz lived in Hagen, Germany with his mother and brother, the father had died, and my grandfather Butz was brilliant a young man, and he had a very good education. I don't know how they gave it to him with the father gone and all, but he was about to travel a great deal and he did over there in Germany. And then he became acquainted with the "forty-niners," or the "forty-eighters" not 'forty-niners," "forty-niners" is this country, "forty-eighters" of whom Carl Schurz was the leader and all those young men wanted to make more or less of a Republic of Germany because they didn't like the management of the country and they tried their best, but they didn't succeed and so the authorities were after them and they had to get out or they would have been in jail and in that way my grandfather left Germany and went to England, stayed there for awhile, then he went to New York. And all those young men did about the same thing, they all landed in New York, and of course many of them knew each other and I can remember my grandmother who was, Julie Magnus, was her name. The Magnus family had moved from Germany two years before, they lived in New York and grandmother had two or three sisters

Ella B. Butz, cont. 4

and two or three brothers, I don't know how many, and she said that their house there in New York was a regular Club House for those German boys because they all knew each other and they could speak German and that's how my grandmother and grandfather met. And they were married in 1852 in New York City. The mother had died in the meantime of black cholera, that was a great scourge there at that time, and they, I don't know how they happened to do it, but anyway, they wanted to go to Chicago, I guess grandfather wanted to spread out a bit, he was a scholar and no business man at all, he tried business a couple of times and everything went wrong because he really was a scholarly man and he knew both German and English and he wrote many editorials or papers in Chicago, at that time he didn't know so many, but by the time he went to Chicago he did, he knew more places where he could, where they would take his work.

RA: Did he write, work for the Staatszeitung?

EBB: Oh yes, all the German papers, the German paper in St. Louis, and Cincinnati and -

RA: Milwaukee?

EBB: Milwaukee, and at one time Hoboken, they went to Hoboken, but that's what his work was and of course he wasn't very well paid, how he ever raised his big family I don't know, but anyway that was his work, he was a scholar.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 5

RA: Well, many of those men were, I understand, very well educated.

EBB: I think of that group they were. Well, in '52 they married in New York and then they came to Chicago via the Erie Canal and over land so that they were in Chicago in 1883; that would be wouldn't it, no, in 1853 and grandmother's first child was born there in Chicago, but it was born dead. And when I think of it I just wonder what kind of doctors they had in Chicago at that time. Here this poor little bride twenty-one years old with nobody - she didn't know anybody around you know, of course, the young men friends of her husband had families and I suppose they all knew each other, Well, anyway, then in '55 my father was born so he really was the first child in the family and then she had, my father was the first, then Otto was the next, then Alvin and then the sister, the one sister, oh yeah, there was another sister along in there, what was her name, I can't think of it, but anyway, she died as a child, but the other sister lived and her name was Millie, and then after, when Millie was six years old was when the Chicago fire started, in 1871 -

RA: In 1871, October.

EBB: October, 1871, yes, and that day grandmother had her seventh child, the day of the fire. And the two older boys were 16 and 14 and they went scouring

Ella B. Butz, cont. 6

around trying to find a cab or some kind of conveyance to get grandmother and the new baby and the little children away and they found a milk wagon, but by the time they got that milk wagon back to their house, the Prissings were friends of the family and they were there with their carriage and their coachman and they were putting grandmother and the new baby and the little children in this conveyance and taking it to the Prissings home, and I don't know just where that home was, but -

RA: Was it north or south, do you have any idea?

EBB: No, I don't know just where it was, but anyway, they got her all nicely settled when the cry came "The fire is coming this way" so they had to get her up again and in the cab and they took her to her brother's home. I think it was on Erie Street, it was very - it was just about where the big Northwestern Station is now in Chicago - and her brother, I don't know which brother, she had several, but anyway, they took her there and that's where she stayed. And in the meantime all this happened, grandfather wasn't in Chicago, he was in Joliet, he had a job there and when he heard about the fire, of course he was about crazy because he didn't know where his family would be scattered, but anyway, he came to Chicago on a hand car, one of these things on the rails, and he found his family then and I

Ella B. Butz, p. 7

think they stayed there because grandmother was in a coma for several days -
they thought she was dead - and the baby was very sickly, but anyway,
grandfather -

RA: Did it survive though?

EBB: Yes, it survived for a year and my aunt who was six or seven years old, her
memory of it is that the baby cried all the time. During the fire of course they
couldn't get any food for it, and they couldn't even get any drinking water, so it
had such a bad start and the baby died after a year, but during that year
grandfather did his work in -

RA: Joliet.

EBB: Joliet, I think it was Joliet. The caretaker of the prison there had big, rather
big quarters, he gave up those quarters to the whole Butz family and they lived
there that whole winter and during that time, of course, they went to Chicago and
they discovered their home was completely wrecked, nothing but the bricks at the
bottom and I don't know how soon they started, but they built their home right
over the old home arid, while they were living in Joliet you see, I guess lots of
people did that same thing, I don't know where they got their money to do it but I
think people were very, very generous with all those people who lost so much.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 8

RA: Have you seen Paul Engle's book on the Chicago fire in the Chicago Historical pictures of Hesslers, they were some of the first photographs that were made of those buildings that were burned in the areas that -

EBB: No, I've never seen that.

RA: I will bring it to you to share with you. It's been autographed by Mary Frances Rymer who was the curator of prints at the Historical Society.

EBB: Do you know who the photographer was?

RA: Hessler, H-E-S-S-L-E-R and he was a very famous photographer, a very early photographer for the -

EBB: Well, I have a woman living here who is the granddaughter of Mr. Moser who took a lot of

RA: Oh yes, I have Moser pictures from my family.

EBB: Well, she's here, Daisy is here, in fact, I eat meals with her every week and I know her grand ... I guess it was her grandfather who took many of the Moser pictures and I think my cousin has one of those, too.

RA: I think Moser came along a little later than Messier and Messier was right after the Civil War that he began with photography.

EBB: Oh, well, that was later then.

RA: Yes.

EBB: Because during the Civil War, that was 1860 to 1865, grandfather knew Lincoln and helped him because

Ella B. Butz, cont. 9

he could give a speech to the German people that they would understand and he made many speeches for Lincoln.

RA: This story runs parallel to the Adler story in Chicago, my husband's grandfather also was a great -

EBB: All those German people knew each other wells

RA: They did, and Gentiles and Jews alike came together in Chicago at that time and all well through the 19th century there was no prejudice, or no turning their backs. Andreas sort of points this out in his history of early Chicago and he interviewed those people individually. Now tell me about your mother's father.

EBB: Well, my mother's parents lived in Germany in Aachen, that's Luft Chappel.

RA: Yes.

EBB: Between France and Germany.

RA: In Alsace.

EBB: Alsace Lorraine, that's right.

RA: My family, my father's family came from there.

EBB: Well, uh, I don't know what grandfather's business was, but I know he had a good factory and he wanted a bigger one, or anyway he wanted a change, and so he had a man build one for him and after it was completed they found that this fella the surveyor, hadn't done the right thing, he had taken two feet

Ella B. Butz, cont. 10

from the people next door and put grandfather's factory on that two feet as well as on his own and grandfather tried to buy it from him and he wouldn't sell and so they had a great to do about it, a great deal of trouble, and it cost grandfather an awful lot of money and he finally decided, well, if that's the way they did things in Germany, he was going to America. So he went to America with his family.

I know there were three daughters, and I don't know how many sons, three or four sons, so they came to America before the Butz's did, I wouldn't know just what year, but they landed in Philadelphia and that's where grandmother met grandfather. Grandfather had been born in Cologne and he'd had a fine education as a pharmacist and when he came to Philadelphia he started a drug store and I don't know how soon they were married, but anyway, they were married in 1859 and they lived over the drug store in the rooms over the drug store. In those days a pharmacist always had to live in the same building with his pharmacy because there was a night bell. Grandmother said that bell rang every single night. Someone was always wanting some medicine mixed during the night and grandfather would have to get up and do all that. Well anyway, that's where they lived and that's where my mother was born in 1860, she was the oldest child.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 11

RA: And that was on LaSalle Street too?

EBB: That was on LaSalle Street too.

RA: And was that within the Loop area?

EBB: As far as I know, I know it was later, but I don't know if that first house, I don't know if that pharmacy was, I know that the pharmacy, that the, well, I'm getting ahead of my story. After they were married they lived in Philadelphia a while and then they moved to Milwaukee. Grandfather and grandmother had a sister I think, who was married and lived in Milwaukee and I think that grandfather went into business with him, but it didn't work well at all. So he gave that up and he thought that Chicago, in it's recuperation after the fire, would be a very good place for a young man to start a drug store so he had a drug store on the corner of Madison and Wells, that's where his drug store was and he had brought this recipe for coumyss, C-O-U-M-Y-double S, coumyss, that's fermented milk and he had gotten that recipe in Germany and he'd made it and sold it over there and he brought that . . .

The Shurtleff home was right across the street from us on Lake Avenue in Wilmette and Bernice was the youngest daughter and she married the son of Mr. Cole who was the big stationer, and he sold all stationery things to everybody and he had a big business and he

Ella B. Butz, cont. 12

was a very civic minded man so that he did a lot for the City of Chicago. Well, when they had their 25th anniversary, they got this thing out and then when Bernice had married his son, and the city wanted to tear down the Henrici store. The night before they began tearing it down they got out another pamphlet exactly like the one they'd had 25 years before and gave each of the guests a souvenir of that and so Bernice and her husband got this as a souvenir and when they saw my grandfather's ad in there they gave it to us.

RA: Oh, isn't this priceless. I would like to be able to copy this on the Xerox,

EBB: All right, you can do that.

RA: and the advertising in it because I think it would add to the typescripts of this story.

EBB: Well, at the time he sold that coumyss, well you read the ad, what it is, it's for people with bad stomachs who can't digest milk, it's there, just read that.

RA: Yes, the brainworker's restorative, it calms nervous irritation and is a relish for a weak stomach, nourishing, strengthening and exhilarating beyond anything known, like sleep, it is tired nature's sweet restorer. When suffering from nervous fatigue by overwork or other causes, try it in place of wine or dinner. Pint bottles 25."

Ella B. Butz, cont. 13

EBB: And he sold oodles of it. He made it in that store on Wells and Madison - on the corner of Madison and Wells.

RA: And Wells was then 5th Avenue.

EBB: Yes, that's right, that's right, that's right.

RA: And this A. Arend A-R-E-N-D, chemist.

EBB: That's right, yes.

RA: Madison Street corner of 5th Avenue, Chicago

EBB: Uh huh, he made a lot of money on that and as I told you before, his three sons, not one of them were interested in the business, they wouldn't have anything to do with it.

A.: Oh.

EBB: So when grandfather died when he was 80, about 80, and I suppose the recipe was just lost or something because our family could have made a lot of money out of it if they had it. See, I was just a tiny child and -

RA: What did your father do then if he wasn't interested in the chemistry?

EBB: He got a job at the Chicago Title and Trust Company.

RA: Yes.

EBB: He was a Real Estate Examiner.

RA: I see.

EBB: When they'd get a job and give the address and everything, my father would go to that place and remeasure it to see that everything was right.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 14

He had that job a good many years.

RA: I could see then why he wouldn't like the job of a chemist because that's indoor work and the other was outdoors.

EBB: Yes, that's right, and his brother Otto in the meantime had had a college education, he was the brilliant one in the family, and of course the family was very poor after the fire, they had lost everything and whatever money they could get together after they'd fed the family, they were in grade school of course, in different grades, why they saved as much as they could in order to send that brilliant boy to college.

RA: And where did he go?

EBB: He went to Ann Arbor,

RA: Michigan, University of Michigan.

EBB: Yeah, and there he met his wife. She was from LeRoy, New York, she was a...a.., - do you know where LeRoy is?

RA: LeRoy is upstate New York, in the western part, yes I do know, because some of my family, the Snow family from Vermont went out there and settled near there. It's in what they call the Black River Country.

EBB: Do any of your family know what the name, what Alice Rodgers parents names were?

RA: I might be able to find out for you.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 15

EBB: Because I have a cousin who's working on geneology. She just loves it and the last letter I had from her she said "Now I'm working on Alice Rodgers, I'd like to know what her parents did and what their names were."

RA: We'll talk about that later when we finish this, but now I've got you back into Wilmette. Your grandmother, after your grandfather died, moved with you out here and that was in -

EBB: 1896 and we rented the house. I think I told you this before, the real estate man was Horace Drury.

RA: He built many of the houses, did he build this house?

EBB: No, because this house, when we got it was 25 years old.

RA: And who built it, do you know?

EBB: No.

RA: You don't know who built it, uh, was -

EBB: The woman who built it, name way, gosh what was her name, the name, Mrs. - what was her name Amelia Glidden.

RA: Amelia Glidden owned it.

EBB: She built it.

RA: She built the house, 802 Lake Avenue.

EBB: And then when it was 25 years old we lived in it a couple of years as renters and then Grandma Arend bought it.

RA: That would have been about 1898.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 16

EBB: Or 9, I think we lived in it a couple of years, Helen was born in 1899 and I think that was the year Grandmother bought it, bought the house. It was an 8 room house on a plotted corner 100 x 200, 100 on Lake Avenue and 200 on Eighth, and we wouldn't buy it, this was a - well I shouldn't tell that first, uh it was when we rented it, we wanted to rent it for the winter because you see we were going to move anyway and the folks liked Wilmette so they - Horace Drury and Mrs. Glidden and my father and uncle got together and it was decided that Mrs. Glidden would put in a bathroom and a furnace. We wouldn't buy it, and we wouldn't live in it, that is, we wouldn't rent it until she did that and she said well, she would do that. She would put in a bathroom and a furnace if we'd pay two month - two years rent in advance and the rent was \$25 a month, so my uncle and father got that much money together for the two years rent and after we lived there for two years grandmother bought it and she bought it for \$3,600.00.

RA: Unbelievable.

EBB: An eight room house with a new bathroom and a new furnace.

RA: What kind of lighting was there?

EBB: Kerosene lamps from the ceiling. We'd pull them down every day, clean them and trim them and put them back up again.

RA: And you had to use scissors to cut the wicks?

Ella B. Butz, cont. 17

EBB: Yes, yes, that was the kind we had.

RA: And wipe the -

EBB: I don't know how long we had it that way but after grandmother bought it she put in the fixtures and Mr. Skelton who had lived in the house and was now living in his own house a block away said "Oh, you folks are so foolish to put in combination fixtures for electric light and gas because" he said "Wilmette'll never have electricity." Well anyway, they put in those and then when electricity came they tore those out again and put electric light all through the house.

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: See, through the, pardon me, we lived there so long, we improved it all the time. Another thing, grandmother had a son in the lumber business in Mississippi and he sent hardwood lumber so that we had all hardwood floors. It was softwood before that. So we improved the house quite a little -

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: But we certainly got it cheap.

RA: Well, those day though, \$3,000 was a great deal.

EBB: Yes, it was a lot of money.

RA: And it was the turn of the century, this was when my grandparents built their home and they had a bath, the first bathroom.

EBB: Are you taping this? - OK

Ella B. Butz, cont. 18

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: Well, what else was it that I was going to tell you.

RA: Well, tell me about who some of the people were that lived in that block that you remember,

EBB: Well, the Chances were across the street where my aunt and uncle had boarded and there was just the old, lady Chance, real old woman and her unmarried daughter Alice.

RA: And they kept boarders?

EBB: Well, I think just for the summer, it wasn't the regular boarding house, but that when they were asked they said yes, they'd do it just for the summer.

RA: Oh yes, and were there many of those kind of houses in the Village.

EBB: Not that I know of. Then when we wanted to come we asked the neighbors next to us on Lake Avenue, the Pearsons, they were Mr. and Mrs. Louis J.

Pearson, he was a lawyer, and they had two babies. They had, I think, a, Leo wasn't more than a year old and Hazel was about 4. They had those two little children and their house was big enough, they had one great big room with an attic room off of it and so my parents persuaded them to take our family on as boarders, but the parents had a big room with the bed in it and then off of this was this attic room and my sister Florence and I slept in the attic room.

RA: Oh yes.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 19

EBB: I was nine and she was thirteen, and we were there that summer.

RA: Was the attic hot without any air conditioning or was it cool?

EBB: Oh well, in those days when we had sizzling hot days everything was hot.

RA: Even in Wilmette.

EBB: Yes, even in Wjlmette it was very hot but the folks enjoyed the lake so much, we were always going down to the lake, I mean that's why they went, because that summer before they had enjoyed it so much.

RA: What kinds of activities were held at the lake?

EBB: Nothing, nothing, just whatever you did yourself and you didn't have a cabin to undress in "atal," you had to undress behind the bushes and my uncle, I wanted to tell you this, but my uncle, my mother's brother, lived in California and he used to come every once in a while to see his mother at our house and one sizzling day the three men decided that they'd go down to the lake and have a nice dip to get cooled off because the day had been just terrible, so hot, so they went to the lake and my uncle was a big fat man with a big, big tummy. Well, they undressed in the bushes, the three men, and when they got back from their swim they found a tramp had taken all of Uncle Willy's clothes. He'd left the thin man's clothes, but they had, taken everything

Ella B. Butz, cont. 20

that belonged to Uncle Will, so my father and my uncle had to give what they could, what Willy Arend could get on, and they had to walk home that way, one of them with a lantern in front and the other (laugh) -

RA: Did they go skinny dipping as they say today?

EBB: No, I don't think they did.

RA: They had bathing suits?

EBB: They had bathing suits, but that's all you see, because everything of Uncle Will's was stolen and my father and uncle led them... they told us all this the next day of course, we children were in bed asleep and a (laugh) they laughed so all the way home, they could hardly walk because it was so funny - these three men and the one in the middle without hardly any clothes on - that's the story that they told us.

RA: That's a wonderful story. Tell me, do you remember, you said, I guess I asked you, about a house in the 900 block in which a murder had been committed?

EBB: Not on Lake Avenue. It was on 11th Street.

RA: Oh.

EBB: Across from the Congregational Church, or next to, there were a couple of houses there and there was a double house in the middle of the block between, on 11th Street between Lake Avenue and Central Avenue. It was a great big house and a murder was

Ella B. Butz, cont. 21

committed there, I can remember as a child being scared to death to walk by the house - I'd never heard of a murder before - but I don't know any of the details.

RA: This would be on the street that the Melville Brown house was on.

EBB: That's it, that's it, of course, the Brown house wasn't there at that time.

RA: No, and also I believe the Northams lived, Miss Susan Northam -

EBB: She lived on 10th Street. She kept the, I don't know if it was rumored, but she gave people meals. I remember in later years our English teacher at New Trier lived there and had her meals with Miss Northam.

RA: This then was very often the case with unmarried people, was it not, or widows who had lost -

EBB: That was the only one I know of in town.

RA: I see.

EBB: It was a regular sort of a boarding house. It wasn't common at all.

RA: But people didn't go on relief or anything like that when they were widowed or, they found something -

EBB: I don't know of anybody in that condition.

RA: And I understand that it was done privately when they were, and quietly by people who knew this situation of the people.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 22

EBB: Yes, everybody knew everyone else. Now the Pearson, well he was a lawyer, as I say, but just starting out and I don't think they'd ever taken anybody before and I don't think they ever did after. She had a young girl that helped her, oh golly, what was her name, Robb, Robb, R-O--double B. I don't know where she came from, but anyway she was Mrs. Pearson's helper. Helped to get the meals and wash the dishes and everything, but she wasn't a servant.

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: She just did it for that summer, Jessie Robb, that was her name, Jessie Robb, and she married one of the town boys Kirk, a Kirk boy.

RA: Oh yes, so that was another family in town. Can you think of any other families right within your area that -

EBB: Now let's see, uh.

RA: Did the Wheelocks live on Central Street at that time?

EBB: Yes, uh huh, just a couple blocks from us. I'm trying to think of the name of the family of the house, the great big house on the corner of Lake and 9th Street. I know at the time we lived there it was a big house with that great big porch and there was a retarded child. The family had a retarded child and lived there and when we got there he was a full grown man and they had a nurse for

Ella B. Butz, cont. 23

him and she'd put him out on the porch to just watch the passers by, he must have been over 40 or something like that.

RA: Was that on the north side of the street on the south side?

EBB: North.

RA: North side.

EBB: Same side we're on.

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: They were the one on the corner of 9th and Lake and we were on the corner of 8th and Lake.

RA: Oh yes, was that the house that later became the Swan house?

EBB: No, the Swan house was one block west of that house.

RA: I see, that's 10th I guess - and do you know -

EBB: That Swan house was a Dingy house originally, Sam Dingy, and Sam had a pickle business I think, and he lived, he moved away, moved to Wisconsin, what's the name of the town, the big town in Wisconsin?

RA: Madison, Milwaukee? He had several brothers in the area did he not?

EBB: Well, he had Charles, Charlie Dingy, and Charlie, didn't he marry Vern Penuska?

RA: Yes.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 24

EBB: I don't know where Sam's wife came from, they were the ones who had the big house and Charles had the small one.

RA: Were they brothers of Squire Dingy?

EBB: I don't think so, I don't think so. I think Squire Dingy was quite a, quite a little older. He might have been an uncle or somebody like that, I don't know.

RA: I see. He lived in Ravenswood I understand.

EBB: Oh, did he? Well, I don't know that.

RA: That came from the Cook County Biography and History.

EBB: But Sam took his business up to Wausau.

RA: Wausau, was that it?

EBB: And they moved up there and had his business in Wausau.

RA: That was a lumber business wasn't it - there were many sawmills, logging -

EBB: Oh many, yes, but he was in the pickle business.

RA: He was in the pickle business?

EBB: He had a factory there, but he left Wilmette and I don't know if he sold his house. I suppose he did but we missed Dingy and the children, we knew all of them and they moved to Wausau.

A; Were they called Squire Dingy's Pickles?

EBB; No.

RA: No, but they sold it to Ma Brown I understand.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 25

EBB: Oh, is that so?

RA: This is what I understood that pickle business whether it was Stanleys or Squires

EBB: Uh huh, uh huh.

RA: was sold to.

EBB: And uh, Sam you see, built his house on the corner right next to the family home which is in the middle of the block, and Charlie built his house next to the family house still in the middle of the block, but it was a long block, there were other lots to sell.

RA: Were there many handicapped children like the one you described?

EBB: I never heard of any.

RA: Only

EBB: And I don't know how long he'd lived there, how old he was, but he seemed old to me, he had a beard and the hair was kinda long.

RA: Yes.

EBB: And he could do nothing. He just sat in his wheelchair and his nurse was Geisler, Mrs. Geisler, and she had a son Johnny who was in my grade at school.

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: And later Mrs. Geisler, when this handicapped man died, I think the Lathams, Carl Latham, he was the youngest of the Lathams, was married and had two

Ella B. Butz, cont. 26

little girls and they hired this Mrs. Geisler to be their maid of all work and Johnny lived there too and kept on with school.

RA: Tell me, the Drake house must have been built after

EBB: Oh yes.

RA: — you came.

EBB: Oh yes, long after. It was quite a modern house and it was a corner right opposite the Swans. I imagine Sam Dingy sold to the Swans because the Swan married a Drake (laugh).

RA: Yes, this I remember in Wilmette history. But tell me, do you remember a house that was on that lot that the Drake house was built on before it?

EBB: It was an empty lot.

RA: It was an empty lot.

EBB: Yes, an empty lot because I used to go across it at Lake Avenue, you'd go across it to go to school.

RA: And you could cut right -

EBB: Cut right through the lot, it was the first and only house on that block.

RA: Were there many houses of the old houses that were moved from lots later to be built on with more modern homes, for instance, the one that —

EBB: No, because we were in a wonderful location. We were only three blocks from the school and about five blocks from the Northwestern Station and when the North Shore train came through, why everything

Ella B. Butz, cont. 27

was very convenient, you could walk to the lake, it was a wonderful location. No, I don't think, there were just the houses that I mentioned.

RA: Now, was Llewelyn Park then existing when you -

EBB: Yes, the Lathams lived in Llewelyn Park. I think that they built that whole community.

RA: I have discovered that many Wilmette people also owned land in DeKalb County Farms and the Lathams were one of them and Mr. Latham was a banker in Sandwich, Illinois.

EBB: Oh, was he?

RA: And his daughter is the mother of Judge Latham Castle and this is where he got his, well, he was a Federal Judge I believe in Chicago and I have just discovered the connection recently.

EBB: I wonder how they got out to their Llewelyn Park because there was no transportation at that time.

RA: Yes, Fred Northam discovered this for me. There is a plaque placed by the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad naming all the stations on it and Llewelyn Park is the last stop on the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad.

EBB: That's right, that's right.

RA: It later became the North Shore.

EBB: Yeah, it was extended.

RA: Right of way, and then was extended down Greenleaf Avenue into -

Ella B. Butz, cont. 28

EBB: Yeah, that's right.

RA: And this Mr. Northam was instrumental in finding, and it saved a great deal of homework because Mr. Jim Reichmann, do you remember Jim Reichmann. - they came here about 1905 I believe.

EBB: Came to Wilmette?

RA: Came to Wilmette.

EBB: Whiteman?

RA: Reichmann R-E-I-C-H-M-A-double N, they too were German.

EBB: No, I don't know that name at all, my family evidently didn't know them.

RA: Well they, Jim lives on the same stree

EBB: That her parents and her aunt and uncle, they built two houses on Central Street while they lived in our house as a - just a - rented it and she told me that winter, I guess they came out in the fall, in our house while their houses were being built and in December, well now, let's see, I don't know how long they lived there but I know they moved into their new houses on Central Street, her uncle and aunt and their children, and Alice's mother and father, I don't - think they had only one child then because twins were born while they were in our house and one twin died, the other was Harold, and Harold, I knew Harold very well and he was older than Alice,

Ella B. Butz, cont. 29

and she told me that they had all lived there together, the two families while their two houses were being built.

RA: And the rest of the Wheelocks, now which was which... Sam Wheelock was in the bank, was he -

EBB: - was it Seymour -

RA: There was Sam, Samuel A. I believe

EBB: Wheelock?

RA: Wheelock

EBB: I don't know anything about them. I only knew these two families, the one Alice was in.

RA: Who was her father?

EBB: E. B. Wheelock.

RA: E. B. Wheelock, and the other one was -

EBB: I can't remember what his first name was but I know their first child was Seymour, no not the first, Bertha was first. Bertha and Seymour and -

RA: Grace.

EBB: Well before Grace, Bessie and then Grace and then Raymond and Raymond was in my room at school

RA: I see, and that's where the Seymour Burge came from in Grace's family.

EBB: Yes, that's right.

RA: I see. This probably was the mother's maiden name, could it have been?

EBB: I didn't know that branch of the family, they were much older, those children, but the Alice Wheelock

Ella B. Butz, cont. 30

family, they were more my age.

RA: So their house is - is what about?

EBB: 90 years old. Alice was born in that house, in December right after they moved in, but the house, it was completed that summer and then both families moved into their own houses. Alice was born, it was the 20th of December and she's lived in that house ever since - imagine.

RA: Yes.

EBB: She's 90 years old.

RA: Yes, and the barn's still is intact there.

EBB: Oh yes, yes they are.

RA: Just as - and did they used to keep horses in the barn that they -

EBB: I don't know about that, I know they kept a cow. There was a vacant lot next to them, the Wheelocks lived in the middle of the block, and I remember their oldest son Seymour took care of that cow.

RA: Oh yes, so they had milk probably.

EBB: Yeah.

RA: - for both families?

EBB: For both families.

RA: Very interesting. Well, I talked to Margaret Wheelock and I hope to go back when Alice is feeling well.

EBB: She's quite a little younger.

RA: 16 years.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 31

EBB: She wouldn't know very much as Alice would.

RA: That's right and -

EBB: - and Alice, I haven't seen her for a long time, but she is perfectly capable of talking and telling you things, she's done pretty well.

RA: She told me as Grace Burge did, some very delightful stories in the past.

EBB: Uh huh, uh huh, Grace Burge was a little older than I was so I wasn't in that crowd at all.

RA: And her husband was in the refrigeration business I believe.

EBB: Was he, I don't know anything about that.

RA: She said the first automatic refrigerators that were on the market, I believe, in the wholesale area.

EBB: Very likely, well I think Mr. Burge did very well in business.

RA: And that is quite a family. I hope to get Donald Burge to talk.

EBB: Is he the one that's handicapped?

RA: He's the one that got shot.

EBB: Wasn't one of the girls being saved?

RA: Yes, and she lives in Winnetka and I don't know her last name.

EBB: I don't know those girls.

RA: But Grace, of course, being in the same church, I knew quite well because I used to pick her up.

EBB: You never knew Mabel?

Ella B. Butz, cont. 32

RA: No I didn't.

EBB: She's gone. She lost her mind, and I don't know where they put her but I know she's been dead many years, but she was quite an artist. I knew her quite well before she became ill.

RA: Were there any other houses along in where the Wheelock's houses are on Central Street?

EBB: There's the one on the corner was Mr. Joy.

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: And he had two daughters, one of them married a Scheidenhelm and - I don't know who the other one married, but there were two daughters, and I think they adopted a boy, what was his name, but anyway, he was more my age and I don't know where they got him but they had no son so they adopted this little boy. I don't know if he's still living or not.

RA: There were two Scheidenhelm families I believe.

EBB: Yes, the one a block east from us, the same corner we have, and then that was on 9th, no 7th and Lake and then the other house the Scheidenhelms built on that same corner on Forest and 8th.

RA: Yes.

EBB: Lovely people.

RA: Well, isn't there one on Central, no Lake is right, yes and Forest, that's right.

EBB: And I was told when I was a child that Mrs. Mitchell had lived in our house, rented it you know, and that

Ella B. Butz, cont. 33

she had a, well it must have been more like a kindergarten than a school, but she had all the little children in the neighborhood came to school and they had their school in the front bedroom which was my bedroom.

RA: Is that the mother of the Mr. Mitchell who lives on -

EBB: No.

RA: No, there are no children, no.

EBB: The Mitchells had one daughter, her name was Nelson and they were divorced I think.

RA: And the Scheidenhelms, or the Joys and the Wheelocks were there any other, I noticed the Dingy has a - one Dingy family had a 50th anniversary - the Drurys it was, lived on Central Street when they had their 50th anniversary.

EBB: I don't know anything about that.

RA: This is some old clipping.

EBB: I suppose they built their own house there, I don't know.

RA: And they were in the abstract and title business in the Loop I believe. Horace and Edwin Drury.

EBB: Well you see, they were the ones that we bought our house from, the Amelia Glidden house, we bought from, through the Drury boys.

RA: I see, they were downtown businessmen.

EBB: Yes, and then Myrtle Drury was the daughter of Edwin Drury. They lived on Elmwood or some other street

Ella B. Butz, cont. 34

right around there, and they took Myrtle when she was a tiny baby. I think her mother died, I don't know what happened to her father, but the Edwin Drurys only had one daughter and Edwin's brother was the one who had this little baby Myrtle, and he brought that to his brother's house in Wilmette, so Myrtle grew up as if she were the daughter of the family where she lived, but were really her aunt and uncle.

RA: Oh yes, I think Mr. Northam told that same story, too, and this - well, what were some of the activities that you did as children and what did the adults do?

EBB: Oh yes, well, believe me there wasn't much for children. I would love to have gone to the lake but no child was allowed to go down there.

RA: Oh really.

EBB: Oh, there was nobody to look after them and those were the years where there were so many tramps. Tramps came to your back door "Won't you give me a sandwich," or like that, so little children - I never went to the lake alone. I went when the older people went, but that's all, and - what was the question that you asked me?

RA: About the activities.

EBB: Oh yes, the activities, well, I don't know how old I was, I imagine 11 or 12 when the Country Club was

Ella B. Butz, cont. 35

built. It was built right in the middle of the woods where, I think, it was Elmwood and 6th or Elmwood and 7th, just a crude building and they had tennis courts and croquette courts and the people who belonged to that club, I imagine it costs almost nothing, would go there every Saturday afternoon. The men would play tennis and we kids would just do anything around and then I think each family brought something to eat and then the clubhouse kitchen served them with coffee or tea or something like that. But I can remember going there many times on Saturday afternoons, I loved to go. I used to walk west on Lake Avenue and then over to Forest and Elmwood and at Elmwood the house on the corner had a fence and that fence had a gate and you'd go through that gate, and there was a path right through the woods to the first Country Club in Wilmette.

RA: For goodness sakes, is that where Mrs. Scheidenhelm once told me about having picnics on Fourth of July and -

EBB: Yes, I think we went there on Fourth of July, and times like that. The children and the parents would go Saturday afternoon and I don't suppose we stayed late, but we had an awfully good time. I enjoyed it, I remember.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 36

RA: They were all family affairs?

EBB: Well, yeah, they were people who wanted to belong to a club. I don't know what the dues were, but I know we'd eat our supper then, and then instead of playing tennis or anything like that anymore, they danced. They had a very crude club house but they danced, I remember.

RA: Were they, did they play cards?

EBB: Not that I remember - Methodist Church was all off of those and when I was about 11 I went to dancing school. This building, I remember telling you this, was on the corner of Central Street and Wilmette Avenue where Lyman's Drug Store is.

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: There was a building there, in fact they kept library books in there.

RA: Miss Law.

EBB: Yeah, very likely, but I used to go there for dancing school. I met this little boy there I liked very much and in later years I got in touch with him again when we were both grown up, we were both in our 30's. Did you ever know of Josephine Miller?

RA: Josephine Mil -

EBB: That's one of the Catholic family.

RA: Oh yes, No I - that name doesn't - Millers - I knew many Millers from Gross Point.

Ella B, Eutz, cont. 37

EBB: Well, they were likely related, but Josephine was a little older than I was, very smart gal and she had a sister Louise, a little bit younger than I was, and I remember when I was teaching in Sheyboygan, Wisconsin, I got a letter from Josephine from Grants Pass, Oregon, and she said that she went to a rodeo and a man came up to her and said "Aren't you Josephine Miller" - "Yes" - he said "Where's Ella Butz?" (laugh) so she told him and he wanted her to write to me and get permission for him to write to me, that was how careful young people were in those days. We were in the middle 20's. I was teaching and they had moved west to a fruit orchard and that's what his father did, and I suppose he helped him, I don't know, but I never - Douglas always wanted me to come out there but I didn't think that was a proper thing for a girl to go out that way. It's very different now.

RA: Well, yes.

EBB: But we corresponded for quite a few years. I can remember him in dancing school. Oh, I loved to dance with him. He danced very well and he was such a handsome little fellow with big brown eyes. I was quite entranced with him.

RA: And his name was Douglas?

EBB: Douglas Wood. And he was another one of these children whose parents had died and the aunt and

Ella B. Butz, cont. 38

uncle took him to raise him. Of course when I got acquainted with him it was - I was a freshman at New Trier, he was a sophomore. -

RA: There were many orphaned children in those days weren't there.

EBB: Oh yes, did you know about the McGroon family?

RA: McGroon? No,

EBB: Well there was a brother and Maude and Lucy and Elizabeth. Those four children were left not homeless but without parents, both parents had died and the whole village got together to decide what to do with this family for they didn't have hardly any money and they were just teenagers. Well, they could have been a little older or a little younger, I don't know, but anyway, they got together and anybody who'd take one of these children into their home and treat them like their own children. I don't know if they paid them anything, but anyway, there were four homes that they got, now, the Wood home where Douglas was, I think that - I think his parents had died and they were related to the Woods in some way, So he was with the Woods and there was a family on Washington Avenue, I can't remember their name now, but they took Lucy, and there was a dressmaker in town who needed some help, these children were supposed to work their way, and Bessie, Bessie I think her name way, was in high school part, but she was out of school for a while, and in order to graduate her sisters and brothers

Ella B Butz, cont. p 39

were all gotten old enough that they could support themselves, but Lucy had nothing, not Lucy, Bessie. And she was in high school I know when I was and I thought she was wonderful because I didn't get any place in my Physics classes and she was a whiz and she used to help me. I don't know whatever became of her, but those children were sort of farmed out, they didn't have to pay any rent, they worked their way and I suppose they had a little bit of money left for each one, but anyway, they all got their education that way and I don't know what became of them.

RA: Just like so many people were farmed out in Colonial times in the east and as apprentices.

EBB: Uh huh, and they did very well and Bessie was a smart girl, she was real smart. I shouldn't wonder if she'd become a teacher but I'm not sure. Lucy didn't want to go to school anymore and she loved to sew and she was apprentice to a dressmaker. I never knew her like I did Bessie.

RA: Were there many dressmakers in town?

EBB: Oh, two or three. I can remember going with mother to the Perouts and having Mrs. Perout put a dress on me that she'd made and fit it to me. I can remember that when I was about 11 or 12.

RA: Were there many women who did their own family sewing in those days?

Ella B. Butz, cont. p.40

EBB: I imagine so, I don't know. I know my family didn't take to sewing. Mother didn't know anything about sewing so that she always had our dresses made, couldn't buy them ready made.

RA: And yet you became quite a needle woman, didn't you?

EBB: Yes, and as I look back I think how in the world did I ever learn to use a pattern. I have no memory of it. But I have memory of this, that in those days they would hire a dressmaker to come to your home and stay a week and get all the members of the family sewed up and I think that grandmother had a woman in Chicago who came to her and when we moved to Wilmette she came out to Wilmette and she'd stay a week or two and get us all sewed up and I imagine in my childhood I was fascinated watching her use a pattern, because I have no memory at all of ever using a pattern.

RA: And yet you know that you -

EBB: It was a natural gift for me and then when I grew up I went to school in Chicago on State Street for one year and then later I took this Home Ec. course up in Northern Wisconsin and then taught it for a while.

RA: I see. That must have been one of the first Home Ec.

EBB: Yeah, I think it was. We uh -

RA: Where did you take it in Wisconsin?

Ella B. Butz, cont. p.41

EBB: Menominee, Wisconsin. That's not far from St. Paul. Do you know it?

RA: Oh yes.

EBB: Menominee was a lovely little town. It was only a two year course at that time. Now it's a great big school, four years and all the sciences and it's a wonderful school for boys. More for boys now than when I was there. You could count the boys on one hand. We girls didn't have any social life at all because there weren't enough boys. I know I went to a dance .or two but as I say, boys, there were so few boys in the school. It drew all the girls so there were many, many girls. And then after I finished my course, I taught for six years.

RA: Wisconsin was quite advanced educationally.

EBB: Yes. I think that it has wonderful schools now. The Stout Institute is Stout State College now.

RA: Is that where you went?

EBB: Yes. It was Stout Institute when I went.

RA: I was waiting for the name of the school and I -

EBB: Stout State College.

RA: Yes, that was very famous.

EBB: It's a four year course. I heard someone the other day say that everybody around there knows Stout because it's a very fine school and boys get fine jobs after they've been through there.

Ella B. Butz, cont. p. 42

RA: Yes. Very interesting sidelight and this really was the way you became a professional.

EBB: Yes, that's right. My older sister when she graduated from 8th grade there was no high school and so she went, and all the children that graduated went to Evanston High School, but that was an awfully hard place to get to from where we lived and they had the Academy, the Northwestern Academy on the grounds and she went her four years of high school there and then she graduated from Northwestern.

RA: yes

EBB: My older sister -

RA: And the Academy was a forerunner of the University or was it simultaneous?

EBB: No, it was just an Annex to the University

RA: I see.

EBB: - where people like my sister who wanted a high school education and couldn't get it -

RA: And did they not have a public high school in Evanston at that time?

EBB: Yes, yes they did have.

RA: They did have - but New Trier was not it.

EBB: No, New Trier was only 5 months old when I went as a freshman. My class went through New Trier, was the first class that went through the four years.

RA: I see. -

Ella B. Butz, cont. p. 43

EBB: That was In 1900. I was out a year so I graduated in 1906.

RA: Oh yes, see. Oh that does go back to early times.

EBB: That reminds me of something I'm gonna get -

RA: Can I get it for you?

EBB: No - teacher at New Trier, Olive Grover.

RA: Yes.

EBB: And she designed this as our class pin. I graduated in 1906 and she designed that. Now, if you want to put that in the -

RA: Historical Society.

EBB: Historical Society. I'd be very glad to let you have it.

RA: OH, THANK' YOU. And it has a 6 on it for 1906.

EBB: 1906, yeah.

RA: Oh, I will give it to the Historical Society in your name.

EBB: I think it's a pretty — it's a pretty little pin, and I haven't any use for it. Do you want to put it in the Historical Society?

RA: Indeed. They will be delighted to have it. Now, tell me about your art classes at New Trier at that time.

EBB: Well, I don't think anything - she was a very good

Ella B. Butz, cont. 44

teacher, and whatever she decided we should do, why that's what we did, but we didn't do that. She designed that herself. I think it's very pretty -

RA: Oh yes, and have it -

EBB: She was art teacher there for many years.

RA: I see.

EBB: Martha, Martha Eddy and Miss Grover, Miss Bersherd, Miss Packer, all those were there when I was there and Walter Asher and the Algebra teacher and Mr. Powell was a History teacher. We all had excellent teachers.

RA: From the very beginning then.

EBB: From the very beginning.

RA: New Trier had quality.

EBB: Miss Berdsher graduated Wellsley, Miss Packer of Vassar, Matty Eddy of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. I don't know the rest.

RA: This is very interesting and then would you care to talk about your work with Margaurite Taylor and who she was because she had quite an influence on this community in her day.

EBB: Yes, she did. She uh, she lived in that cute little house on 8th Street at the end of what was then South Avenue and now its - what is it?

RA: It's something — wood — isn't it? There was this wood —

EBB: Not Elmwood - Elmwood —

—

Ella 3 Butz, cont. 45

RA: No, it's uh -

EBB: I can't think of it.

RA: I can't think of it either.

EBB: But if you go down that street you'd run right into her house. That's an old house too. I don't know how old -

RA: —is it—

EBB: It was sort of a fishing retreat for men who liked to fish in Lake Michigan, and they built that house and I imagine lived in it.

RA: At that spot?

EBB: Yes, just where it is now. It's a little green house, very small rooms.

RA: Yes, I remember that.

EBB: I think it has a fence around it now.

RA: Yes, it's a charming little place. I remember it from years ago. And was that area built up at the time

EBB: Not at all.

RA: That, it wasn't. -

EBB: Not at all, not at all. Very few houses.

RA: Do you remember the Hill family? That lived there on a farm, or was that gone by the time you came out here?

EBB: I don't remember, not at all.

RA: Mrs. Frank Young lives in a house which they own and was originally the Hill farm house in that area.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 46

EBB: In that area - well it was all woods when I was there. All woods except the street that Margaurite was on and that street was parallel to Lake Avenue but way over and - no, I don't remember - I - of course the people I knew were ones that had children my age.

RA: Yes.

EBB: So I wouldn't know the parents.

RA: This is right. I noticed something the other day where Florence Butz - was your mother named Florence or just your oldest sister?

EBB: Just my oldest sister. They named her from Dombey & Son, Florence was a character in there and my parents were crazy about reading Dickens. It was a regular fad for everybody to read Dickens, and so they named their first born Florence.

RA: Yes — it's a —

EBB: But she was born in Des Moines, Iowa, not here.

RA: Oh yes. Did your mother belong to that Literary Group the Wheelocks belonged to?

EBB: No.

RA: No.

EBB: No, I imagine that was -

RA: Travel Club I think it was called.

EBB: And it eventually went into a library, they made a library -

RA: Oh yes.

Ella B. Butz, cont. 47

EBB: — for women that were - no, mother belonged to a bowling club in Chicago. It was the same day as the Wilmette Woman's Club so they never - go to the Woman's Club because she knew everybody in her bowling club and had a good time. They played until they were so old they couldn't play anymore.

RA: Tell me about a Bowling Club that early for women.

EBB: Well, my father and his brother, there were four brothers. The Kroschell boys, their five brothers, they built up a business of installing heating in great big buildings.

RA: And they're still in business. Kroschell Heating.

EBB: Well, that's the Kroschell you know. Are they still -

RA: And Roy Kroschell was a lawyer here in Wilmette, the late Roy Kroschell.

EBB: I don't know what his work was.

RA: He was a lawyer in Evanston.

EBB: But the Kroschell girl is here, she's senile. She lives here. She lived over in the infirmary, they just put her over there. She can't do anything for herself.

RA: Was she a sister of Roy?

EBB: No, a cousin. See there were five boys, each had children, so all those children were related, But it was the five boys that started the building the heating for big buildings, and they became social

Ella B. Butz, cont. 48

and started a bowling club for the "boys. Well then, as each boy married, why the women got together so that the bowling club for the ladies were all women, wives of the men in the bowling club. As I say, mother, the men stopped theirs much sooner, but the women kept on until they couldn't play anymore

RA: Now I'm concerned about you getting to the luncheon table on time and do you want to tell me who you are and where you now live.

EBB: Oh, the thing is on? All right, well, my name is Miss Ella B. Butz, and I was the middle child of Walter Butz and Emma Arend, and as the family grew smaller the big house was too big for my younger sister Helen and me and I wasn't very well, so we decided to sell the house. So we sold the house and we're looking around for a retirement home, where we would live because I was retirement age, but Helen worked at the Northern Trust Bank, she still had her good job, but we settled on a place in California and then before we were ready to go they wrote us a letter that the price had gone way up and I said no, we can't afford that, and so we just let it rest for a while and then one day the little club that we belong to, when they entertained they always took us out to lunch, and then we just had a talking club from Chicago, Evanston and Wilmette, there were oh,

Ella B Butz, cont. 49

eight or -ten of us I guess, and this one girl wanted to give us our lunch over at Marshall Fields - what's the name of it?

RA: Old Orchard.

EBB: Old Orchard, arid we were sitting on the bus going out there and she pointed out, she said "see that vacant lot standing out there, well, they're going to have a retirement home there" and I said "they are well tell me about it" and she said "Well I just went in last week and found out all about it just thinking that I might go." Well, she never went but the next week found Helen and me over there talking to Mr. Smith and Mrs. Harmon about the whole thing, and we saw the plot of land and we picked out our cottage where we wanted it, that day, and wrote on the dotted line. We were going to that retirement home and that's where we are.

RA: And where is it?

EBB: Well my dear, we're in it.

RA: And what do you call it?

EBB: Westminster Place of the Presbyterian Home - Westminster Place.

RA: On Grant Street in Evanston,

EBB: Not only on Grant, Simpson is the other street.

RA: Grant and Simpson.

EBB: Grant and Simpson, and then all these - well I guess that's about all because the rest is all just

Ella B. Butz, cont. 50

property that they're putting up a home that we had - Trinity Court was built just a few years ago. Calvin came first, then Knox was built, and before Knox was all finished we were living here, but the uh - the uh - what was I going to say - the apartment building was being built, started, so we moved in the 23rd of April in '62, and in '63, a year later, this place was open for occupancy and there are quite a few people here still, who came in at that time - in '63.

RA: Yes, and I think you have done a beautiful job.

EBB: Well you're very flattering.

RA: Not at all, I am very, very pleased at the -